

MY MEMORIES OF NEW ZEALAND

By
Douglas Jones ©



A BÔNAU CABBAGE PATCH SUPPLEMENT



Above: Author on holiday in New Zealand

New Zealand – the land of the Great White Cloud - the name given to the country by the Maoris, The Long White Cloud or the Aotearoa, probably by the first settlers going back to the 14th century, but it was in 1840 that New Zealand was recognised as an island. A large area of N.Z. is very hilly with high clouded mountains in parts of the country, hence the words of the Maori – The Long White Cloud.

The explorer, James Cook, was one of many explorers who knew of the Islands in 1769, but it was not until 1840 that the first British settlers set foot in the northern part of New Zealand. This eventually resulted in the Treaty of Waitangi, where the Maoris signed away their lands and rights to the British Crown in exchange for their acceptance as British subjects ... and for law and order. But although Maori translates to a normal person this was not so in the early days.



It was said by Captain Cook that during one of his voyages during 1769/71, there was evidence that the Maori at that time had cannibal tendencies. He says that one day in a cove he saw Maoris cooking a stew and recognised human arm bones. Also a feature of the time was to keep the preserved head of a Maori who had been defeated and killed in a private quarrel. In addition Maoris told Capt Cook that enemies were eaten to absorb the courage and spirit of the defeated. In fact it is said that so many preserved heads were required by Cook's party of scientists, that local Maori chiefs were hard put to keep up with the demand.

After Waitangi, the small town/village of Russell is probably the next most exciting landmark in the history of the area, and indeed of New Zealand. It is the oldest settlement in N.Z. and now numbers approx 800 – 1000 persons. Most are retired and they take a delight in running the tourist trade. There is a museum near their histories Old Church where the holes made by Maori bullets can still be seen in the walls.

Very important to the Maori was Flax, a green leafy plant. It was used to make clothing and braid strong ropes ... to make all types of baskets and was used and is still used in almost everything concerned with Maori culture.



There are two main Islands – the North Island and the South Island. At the halfway mark is a stretch of water called Cook Straits, where at least three large ferryboats ply passengers to and from each Island in a time of 3 hours 15 minutes. In addition there is Stewart Island, to the far south and approximately 20 miles away from the coast of the South Island. With approx 500 inhabitants it is said that Stewart Island is the last loneliest spot in existence.

The most famous bird/animal of New Zealand and also the National symbol is the Kiwi. These flightless birds are very shy and not normally seen in the open area or in the bush, but on occasions if one is lucky a Kiwi can be seen at various displays throughout the country.

Excluding Northern Ireland, New Zealand is slightly larger than U.K. There are approximately 3 million people and the ratio of Maoris is approx 20%-25%. In addition the semi official figure is 10 million cattle and 70 million sheep in the North and South Island. When you consider that the major cities, Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch account for over one and a half million people you can appreciate the vast open spaces that is the lot of the N.Z. people.

N.Z. is the world's largest producer of lamb and mutton and they export to counties throughout the world. In my particular case my lamb imports, as a meat importer, from N.Z. was in excess of 26,000 over a period of 26 weeks during the early part of the year.

Sport in N.Z. is a way of life. Almost everyone plays tennis, cricket, golf, hockey or bowls. You name it and the game goes on in New Zealand. Age is no barrier, and it was a

delight to watch 70/80-year-old men and women taking part, even in tennis – one of the more physical sports. In addition, everyone seems to jog, swimming is popular, and boats are as much taken for granted as cars are.

Unfortunately, New Zealand is in an area of earthquakes, and minor shocks are frequent. In fact on 11th August 1993 a slight earthquake was recorded with damage to buildings and roads in the North Island. Wellington, 200 miles from the tremor was slightly affected whilst there were minor effects in Queenstown, on the South Island, a further 200 miles away. For this reason property in N.Z. is generally wooden built with tin galvanised roofs, very few houses and mostly bungalows are in occupation. In is only in recent years that timber framed bungalows with bricks to the half have been built. You may ask why build in wood and the possible reason is that New Zealand, by all accounts, will always be a mild earthquake country and this is the main reason why the authorities are reluctant to allow buildings as we know them. In addition, building is strictly controlled so that in the event of a slight earthquake damage will not be so severe. Galvanised roofs are always painted bright colours and are very pleasant to see.

There are no snakes in New Zealand. Also there are no native wild animals other than those introduced to the Islands such as pigs and deer. However, one of the dangers, especially on South Island are the sand flies. They attack all parts of the human body, some are quite small but there are some very big ones about. There was a story old of a sand fly that carried a tourist away – do not take any notice of that, the correct story is that it took two small sand flies to take the tourist away, and those two sand flies had won weightlifting medals at the Olympics.

As for religion, Anglicans, Presbyterians and Roman Catholics are in the majority but there are almost all Christian denominations available. So friends, this is a short version of New Zealand, a country of good clean air and friendly people. You will hear many facts and figures and stories about New Zealand, the sheep, the sport, favourable weather, and

most of what you hear is favourable to New Zealand. In this country we are used as an indicator of economic ills or bad weather, and even worse winters, and the effect of all this will reveal long queues of emigrants at New Zealand House in London, for the purpose of emigration.

During my stay in N.Z. in 1987 and again in early 1993, I was fortunate in having relatives who showed me around and visited places and sights not seen by the average tourist. Having said that, I wish to emphasise that even if you were on your own you would never be lonely in New Zealand. In general the people are warm hearted and helpful and will strike up a conversation in all sorts of places and quite probable one would make friends for life.



(Above: Woburn Bowling Club)

I spent some time at a bowling club called Woburn, where I was made very welcome providing that I did not emphasise the fact that the Scarlets beat the All Blacks in 1972 ... Nine points to Three points.

At the Woburn Bowling Club I made an acquaintance of a Mr and Mrs Dai Jones, originally from Harlech, North Wales. Dai Jones had been a sea captain and with numerous visits to New Zealand had finally settled down there on retirement. Being invited to their home it was a treat to hear the Welsh tongue being used by mother, father and daughter.

My sister and her family lived in a place called Lower Hutt, about 10 miles from Wellington, and as a treat I was taken to a horse race

meeting. I was amazed at the number of people in attendance. Apparently, New Zealanders are dedicated horse racing fans and I am sure to find out more of this sport when I have occasion to visit my nephew, Gareth, in Auckland. Gareth is the editor of a weekly Horse Racing Paper.

Talking of horse racing reminds me of a story of the owner/jockey who had a first class stallion, very fast but who had a problem to finish the race. In every race entered and approaching the winning post, say 100 yards away and in a winning position the horse would veer off to the left.

This happened on many occasions and the owner contacted a vet for advice on the problem. The vet pronounced that he was familiar with this problem and that there was only one cure and solution. "What is that?" asked the owner. The vet replied that a certain cure was to place a piece of lead in the horse's right ear. "Ah!" said the owner, clearly impressed, "and how do I do that?" ... "With a gun", replied the vet.

And just a word about Wellington, capital city of New Zealand, and termed the Windy City, where locals keep track of the high speed winds just as they record the normal temperature of weather, high or low. It is said that you can always identify a resident of Wellington because he puts his hand to his cap or hat when rounding a corner.



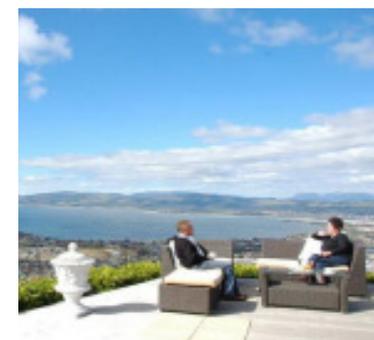
(Above: Geothermal Park – Rotorua)

In the North Island Rotorua is regarded as the main holiday centre and what one will note on entering the city is the strong smell of sulphur in the air and the unexpected sight of steam

rising from various cracks in the ground. From what I have read and seen, Rotorua is built on a vast thermal reserve and there appears to be unlimited steam energy available within an area surrounding the city. Quite close to the city is the Whaka Thermal reserve, which has been developed for the benefit of tourists. In the grounds of the reserve is the country's biggest geyser which lets off at regular intervals and sprays hot water 100 feet or so into the air. It is very spectacular. Also, within the reserve, are hot mud pools, hot springs and mineral pools.

The reserve is also a Maori centre where one can see young ladies being taught the Maori dance, or watch Maori artists carving and creating objects out of wood. In the Rotorua area is Lake Taupo, the largest lake in New Zealand and is advertised as the finest trout fishing area of the world. And trout in New Zealand is regarded as "game". You are unable to buy trout in any restaurant or fish shop but if you have caught a trout the chef in the hotel or the restaurant will gladly cook it for you.

Another Rotorua attraction is the agra-drome where you can see how the New Zealand sheep business operates. There is no such thing as a sheep for all seasons. The Merino, bred in the South Island requires harsh winters and will not survive in the warmer North Island climate. North Island sheep will perish in the South Island snow, and of course, New Zealand quality meat is important with some breeds producing better quality export lamb.



(Above: Rotorua Restaurant, Rotorua)

A further popular attraction at Rotarua is Skyline approached by gondola which goes up Aorangi Peak. At the top one gets a wonderful view of the city and lakes. In addition at Skyline is a miniature race track for a distance of 600 yards or even half a mile. The track is narrow and quite steep and riders used to the incline and bends approach at very high speeds. A wonderful experience but a very easy way to incur serious injury...



(Above: Maori Hangi Feast & Concert)

But to the tourist a must is the Maori Hangi Feast and Concert organised at the better hotels during the evening. On arrival there is the Maori nose-to-nose greeting and after the Maori Concert a traditional Maori Feast, with all items cooked Maori fashion by steam. And one must not also forget the "HAKA" dance. Haka really means a type of dance, but nowadays it refers to the war dance, which the Maoris perform before battle, and in modern times, on the rugby field...and the translation...not so fearsome as one would think from actions on the rugby field...

It is death...it is life...It is life...This is the hairy person who made the sun shine...One step up --- another step up...One last step up. The step out into the sunlight.

So to repeat...Rorarua is a very pleasant holiday centre, which can be used as a base to cover a large area of the North Island. Whilst at Skyline I met a person who was very much like Ivor Emanuel the well known singer. I made this person's acquaintance in the restaurant and found out he was a brother of

Ivor and he had been residing in New Zealand for almost 30 years. I was told that Ivor was in Spain and I was surprised to learn that the person I was speaking to originally lived for many years in Trimsaran.

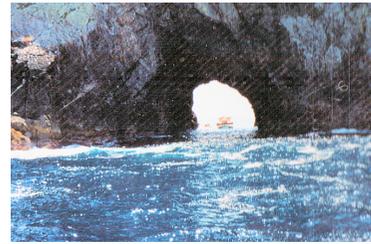
Eventually I find myself in the Bay of Islands, situated very near to the top of the North Island. The weather to the north of this island is very good, warm and sunny, and one of the most interesting sights is to the very tip of the island. This is called Cape Reinga, furthest point north and surrounded by the meeting of the Tasman Sea and the Pacific Ocean and there is great turbulence when the great seas meet. It is said that the clash of the seas will give a height of 30 feet in stormy weather. Another attraction was a ride in a coach on the 90 mile beach, which in fact is 64 miles long and perfectly flat for that distance.

Another unusual attraction was the Clapham Clock collection at Whangerei where there are hundreds of clocks and watches of every type and description, the oldest dating from 1636. Bay of Islands is regarded as a prime holiday



(Above: Clapham Clock Collection)

location and draws big game fishing enthusiasts from all over the world. Swordfish are caught during the season of December to May. Bay of Islands is an apt name for the area as within the vicinity there are a number of islands that can be visited by the numerous holiday launches available for hire or charter. However, may tourists take advantage of a trip called "The Cream Trip". The highlight of this trip is to travel quite a distance into the Pacific and on the return the thrill of the captain taking a fairly large boat through a fairly small hole in the rock. During the trip



(Above: "Hole in the Rock")

stops are made at two or three islands and on one in particular, and in the time available, I, and a few others climbed a grassy hill to a height of about 600 feet. What a view from the top! At least 7/8 islands in full view, and the wonderful show of blue water that encircled each one. I make no apology to the fact that I am repeating myself on the beauty of this sight and all I can say is that it was almost the 9th wonder of the world. All the way around were the blue waters of the bay dotted with islands, inlets, more bays and a superb and breathtaking view received in full payment for a very hard walk/climb to the top of the hill...and I would say that the Bay of Islands together with Rotarua in the North Island and Queenstown in the South Island is a must for any tourist to New Zealand.

And so back to Auckland, a city of sailing ships. Auckland, with huge bays and joined North and South by an enormous bridge, modelled on the Sydney Bridge, which in turn was modelled on the Newcastle Bridge.

(Below: Auckland Harbour)



Auckland has two huge harbours – one on the Tasman Sea and the other on the Pacific.

From Auckland and in the company of my nephew a number of trips were made to the surrounding beauty spots. Muriwai Beach, 25 miles away, was the home to a small colony of gannets that nest between August and February. They occupy a fenced reserve and the birds can be watched at close quarters.

Another trip was to a beach with absolutely black sand, which did not stain ones clothes and was as normal as sand on our own beaches. At this particular beach the area was a favourite with surfers due to the fierce waves that were in abundance. I did sample these waves and it is no exaggeration to say that on occasions they towered over me by 5 or 6 feet. Being knocked over with the force of the water one had to be careful to get up quickly or the undertow or rip would drag one out to sea. So, whatever the interest there is always something to entice the tourist.

Bird watchers will encounter an abundance of bird life; Outdoor, with a love of walking and nature will be a delight for visitors; River and lake fishing is very cheap and a catch almost guaranteed; golfers have a true paradise where the emigrants from Scotland have created excellent golf courses; and New Zealand wine is a fast growing industry and the wines are superb.



(Above: War Memorial – Martinborough)

I have relatives in a small town called Martinborough, about 30 miles north of Wellington. It's quite a small town where roads to the town centre are formed in the shape of a Union Jack. However, Martinborough is gaining a new reputation. At one time it was for its excellent lamb, but now, together with lamb, for its vines and excellent wines.

And now to the South Island which to many others and me is so much like the northern parts of Wales with its high mountains, lakes and valleys, and its not so high areas just like parts of the Black Mountains. Main cities of the South Island are Christchurch, Dunedin, Invercargill, but for the holiday-maker and tourist, Queenstown, more to the south of the island is first choice.

This holiday town is in an excellent location. The town sits below a range of mountains called "The Remarkables" - a fantastic sight in good clear weather. Fronting the town there is a very deep lake, Lake Te Anau, and for the more adventurous there is Bungy Jumping. For this one has to go to a very high bridge called Shotover Canyon, or to another bridge called Skippers Canyon. Jumps at both bridges are about 200/300 feet and the cost of jumping and risking one's life is about £20. OAP go free!



(Above: Steamship Earnshaw)

An attraction of the lake is the grand old steamship "Earnshaw", built in 1912, and still operating throughout the year. One of the main trips on the Earnshaw is to a sheep farm, a working farm, where there can be seen a display of sheep dogs at work. Incidentally, at the farm there are 3 or 4 shaggy bulls, very fierce looking, and visitors are invited at their own risk to saddle or sit on one. With fear in my heart I volunteered and afterwards found out that the bull I sat on was the son of one I had sat on during an earlier visit to New Zealand.

Like Rotarua, Queenstown has its very popular gondola going up to a height of 1500 feet, to the top of what I learned to be Bob's



(Above: Queenstown Gondola)

Peak, a little to the rear of the town. From the top one can see most of the city and lake. Another attraction from the top is hang-gliding not single but dual hang-gliding.

A further attraction to tourists and a target for many New Zealanders is walking the Milford Track, which extends to Milford Sound right away on the west coast. Starting point for many is by coach from Queenstown to the



(Above: Pleasure Cruiser The Milford Haven)

head of Lake Te Anau and from this point a 3 or 4 day walk which some will say "That it is the world's finest walk" and that is how it is advertised. May I say that this Milford Track is not a walk as we would normally walk in South Wales, but a real tough New Zealand challenge, and terminating at Milford Sound, which I understand is named as such for its possible connection with Milford Haven. Milford Sound is regarded as the eighth wonder of the world, notably for its size and for its deepness.

One of the highlights at Queenstown is a trip by sea launch where tourists are taken well out into the Tasman Sea and the return trip is in the shadow of Mitre Peak approx 5000 feet

high, and rising directly from the water and, it is said, that there is a further 3000 feet below the water of the Sound. In this area there are many names familiar to West Wales people - Milford Haven, Cleddau River, even the sea launch was named Milford Haven, and by all accounts the immediate area of Milford Sound was in the first instance navigated by a sea captain from Milford Haven, West Wales, hence the appropriate West Wales names.

Church life in New Zealand is not very different to our church life and the church I visited on many occasions in Lower Hutt was Presbyterian, but whereas at home I feel correct in saying that the majority of worshippers are elderly, in New Zealand I noticed that the younger element were in the majority at the services I attended. It was noticed that photos and telephone numbers of members were displayed in the foyer of the church whilst there was a fairly large play or games hall attached to this particular church.

I also noticed that, compared to the UK motorists have a number of additional rules to follow. As in the UK driving is on the left but there is no parking on the wrong side of the road, and it is an offence to park on the wrong side of the road facing on-coming traffic. Authorised parking is on the left hand side of the road and I noticed that drivers will often make a detour of even half a mile to park in the correct manner. Insurance companies refuse payout if the vehicle damaged was parked on the wrong side of the road. In the towns and cities there is very little right turns other than at a roundabout.

Walking in the City of Wellington is the covered by the unwritten rule that you walk on the left making for easier and faster progress through the main shopping areas.

In New Zealand lunch consists of tea and cakes whilst tea is equivalent to our late evening meal.

In New Zealand the literacy rate is one of the highest in the world and the New Zealanders are on average the world's biggest book buyers. I noticed that there were a large number of bookshops and they always seemed to be doing good trade.

Some important dates to New Zealanders:

1814 First Missionary preached the Gospel at Bay of Islands.

1840 - Waitangi Day commemorates a significant day in the history of New Zealand. It is a public holiday held each year on 6 February to celebrate the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, New Zealand's founding document, on that date in 1840. The Treaty of Waitangi was signed on 6 February 1840, in a marquee erected in the grounds of James Busby's house (now known as the Treaty house) at Waitangi in the Bay of Islands.

1860's - The Central Otago Gold Rush (often simply called the *Otago gold rush*) was a gold rush that occurred during the 1860s in Central Otago, New Zealand. Constituting the country's biggest gold strike, the discovery of gold in Otago led to a rapid influx of foreign miners - many of them veterans of other hunts for the precious metal in California and Victoria, Australia.

1882 - The *Dunedi* was the first ship to complete a truly successful transport of refrigerated lamb. The trip took 98 days. In its capacity, it helped set the stage for New Zealand's success as a major provider of agricultural exports, notwithstanding its extreme remoteness from most markets.

1893 - New Zealand became the first self-governing nation to extend the right to vote to all adult women.

1855 - Wellington Earthquake. Ranks as the most powerful earthquake in recorded New Zealand history, with an estimated magnitude of at least 8.2 on the Moment magnitude scale. It caused vertical movements of two to three metres over a large area, including raising an area of land out of the harbour and turning it into a tidal swamp. Much of this land was subsequently reclaimed and is now part of Wellington's central business district. For this reason the street named Lambton Quay now runs 100 to 200 metres from the harbour. Plaques set into the footpath along Lambton Quay mark the shoreline in 1840 and thus indicate the extent of the uplift and reclamation.

1931 - Napier Earthquake (265 dead).